

St. Mary's Cathedral
Southeast corner of 21st Street and Church Avenue
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS No. TX-293

HABS
TEX
84-GALY
34-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL

Location: Southeast corner of 21st Street and Church Avenue, Galveston, Galveston County, Texas.

Present Owner: Catholic Diocese of Galveston.

Present Use: Catholic Cathedral.

Significance: The Cathedral is the oldest religious structure in Galveston and one of the earliest buildings still standing in the city.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: This building was begun in 1847 and dedicated November 26, 1848. It continued in use through the years and during the Civil War was riddled with shot and shell.
2. Architect: Original architect is unknown. However, Nicholas Clayton was responsible for later additions.

Clayton had worked in the firm of Jones and Baldwin, Architects, Memphis, Tennessee just before and after the Civil War and received his architectural training there. The firm had sent him to Galveston to supervise the construction of the First Presbyterian Church (recorded by HABS as TX-2106). Clayton remained in Galveston and became one of the state's outstanding nineteenth century architects. Some of his most notable works include the First Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Infirmary, The Galveston Pavilion, Harmony Hall, University of Texas Medical School and several buildings in the Strand District.

In 1876 Clayton designed the transept tower and in 1884 was responsible for heightening the two front towers.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Cathedral was built by the Catholic Diocese of Galveston and has held services in the church since 1848.
4. Alterations and additions:

The building was heavily damaged in the 1900 hurricane that devastated the city and Clayton again supervised the repairs. In

1907 additional work was done consisting of replacing the floors and the wainscoting with tile and marble. At that time the exterior was also stuccoed and the cement coping enclosing the lawn erected.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John May Odin, C.M. was the first bishop of Galveston, 1847-1862. He was born in Hauteville, France, February 25, 1800. Odin came to this country in 1822 and was ordained to the priesthood May 4, 1823. He spent a number of years in Missouri until May 2, 1840 when he was sent to Texas.

Odin was instrumental in encouraging the erection of the cathedral. An earlier frame building was the first church, dedicated February 6, 1842. In 1845 a gift of 500,000 bricks from Belgium provided the material for the erection of the present structure.

C. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

Diocese of Galveston - Centennial, 1847-1947, Catholic Youth Organization Centennial Book Committee, Houston, Texas, 1957.

Galveston News, September 15, 1878.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director
Galveston Architecture Inventory
March 17, 1967.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The cathedral is a Gothic design with a central nave, clerestory triforium and side aisles. Two towers flank the entrance and one over the transept.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Foundations: Brick.

2. Wall construction: Brick walls, stucco finish with arched openings.
 3. Structural system: Exterior walls are load bearing. The trussed roof structure is supported by the nave columns which are simple wood coupled columns. The truss structure is elaborate with wood purlins, braces and struts.
 4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The central entrance has double doors, modern.
 - b. Windows: Window openings are formed by lancet arches. The windows are stained glass memorials.
 5. Roof: The roof is gabled.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plan: The plan is the Latin-cross type with central nave side aisles, transepts and apse.
 2. Floor: Floors are 3 1/2" wood center-match.
 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered and painted. The ceiling is divided into panels by the trusses and purlins. Triforium walls are tiled.
 4. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.
 - b. Heating: Modern natural gas.
- D. Site:
1. Orientation and general setting: The cathedral occupies the southeast corner of 21st Street and faces west.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director
Galveston Architecture Inventory
March 17, 1967.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical

ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL
HABS NO. TX-293 (Page 4)

Foundation Inc.; and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.